



# NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

**TODD P. GRAVES**

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**MARCH 24, 2005**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

UPDATE: PROJECT CEASEFIRE  
**ST. JOSEPH WOMAN SENTENCED,  
HARRISONVILLE MAN PLEADS GUILTY  
FOR ILLEGAL FIREARMS**

**KANSAS CITY, Mo.** – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that a St. Joseph, Mo., woman was sentenced and a Harrisonville, Mo., man pleaded guilty in federal court today, in separate and unrelated cases, for being felons in possession of firearms.

\* **Lolita L. Watson**, 39, of St. Joseph, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Nanette K. Laughrey this morning to two years and six months in federal prison without parole.

On Dec. 20, 2004, **Watson** pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm. By pleading guilty, **Watson** admitted that she was in possession of a Squires Bingham .22-caliber rifle on April 24, 2004. Under federal law, Graves explained, it is illegal for any felon to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition. **Watson** has two 1994 criminal felony convictions for distributing a controlled substance and possession of a controlled substance.

**Watson** was originally charged in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury on Oct. 6, 2004, in Kansas City.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Christina Y. Tabor. It was investigated by the St. Joseph, Mo., Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

\* **Walter E. Richardson**, 55, of Harrisonville, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Gary A. Fenner this afternoon to being a felon in possession of three firearms.

By pleading guilty, **Richardson** admitted that he was in possession of a Glock .40-caliber

semi-automatic pistol, a Smith and Wesson 12-gauge shotgun and a Romarm/Cugir rifle on Nov. 15, 2004. Under federal law, Graves explained, it is illegal for any felon to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition. **Richardson** has two 1995 criminal felony convictions for driving while intoxicated and unlawful use of a weapon and a 1996 criminal felony conviction for driving while intoxicated.

**Richardson** also pleaded guilty to illegally acquiring the Romarm/Cugir firearm. By pleading guilty, **Richardson** admitted that when he acquired the firearm he represented that he had not previously been convicted of a felony, when in fact he had three prior criminal felony convictions, Graves said.

Under federal statutes, Graves explained, **Richardson** may be subject to a maximum sentence of up to 10 years in federal prison without parole, plus a fine up to \$250,000.

**Richardson** was originally charged in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury on Dec. 15, 2004, in Kansas City. **Richardson** pleaded guilty to charges contained in a two-count superseding indictment that was later returned by a federal grand jury on Feb. 10, 2005.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jess E. Michaelson. It was investigated by the Lee's Summit, Mo., Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

### **Project Ceasefire**

Project Ceasefire, launched in October 1999, is a cooperative initiative by federal and local law enforcement and the Kansas City Crime Commission that targets for federal prosecution persons who unlawfully use or possess firearms.

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This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

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